

also found several tons of military grade weapons and IED-making material and detained over 1,500 insurgents. Altogether, they overcame numerous challenges, and through courage and dedication, they succeeded beyond anyone's expectations. They have much to be proud of.

On February 27, 2008, the city of El Paso will hold a parade to honor the brave men and women of the 4-1 Cavalry. Our Nation is a better place because of their service and sacrifice on behalf of a noble cause. We can never forget them or their family members. We honor their struggles and successes in that mission.

It is with sincere gratitude that I recognize them today.

NATIONAL PEACE CORPS WEEK

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate National Peace Corps Week and to honor more than 190,000 Peace Corps Volunteers from both my home State of New Mexico and across the Nation. Each year these courageous men and women embark on a 2 year journey to help develop the societies of 139 countries around the world.

Almost 47 years ago, then Senator John F. Kennedy challenged students at the University of Michigan to serve their country by peaceably living and working to develop another country. Over the years, volunteers have made significant and lasting contributions around the world by educating people on basic health issues, performing youth outreach, developing businesses, and offering assistance to small farmers to increase food production.

Today, over 8,000 volunteers are serving in the communities of 74 countries. Many Peace Corps volunteers from New Mexico are currently posted in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Honduras. Volunteers range in age from 25 to 80, with varying levels of education including individuals with undergraduate and graduate degrees. Additionally, the Peace Corps offers programs that support academic studies once a term of service has concluded, which allows many volunteers to further their education after their self-sacrificing service.

The experience volunteers take back with them from their host countries helps shape the course of their lives. Lifelong connections and friendships span these gaps of distance, and volunteers have the satisfaction of not only a job well done, but also of the positive image they created for our Nation.

Throughout this week of celebration, I encourage Americans to ask themselves, "What can I do for my country?"

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

UNITED STATES ARMY'S RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

• Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I am proud to recognize a truly successful program that, over the past decade, has made important contributions to improving quality of life for our soldiers and their families. Now entering its 10th year, the Residential Communities Initiative, or RCI, has brought together members of the private real estate community and the Army to build new family housing, and upgrade and modernize existing family housing, on flagship Army bases all across the country.

Back in 1996, the Army faced the enormous and costly challenge of replacing and renovating its aging and substandard family housing. Too many soldiers and their families were living in inadequate housing. According to the Army itself, roughly 70 percent of housing needed replacement or renovation at an estimated cost of \$7 billion. It was clear that action had to be taken, and in 1996, Congress established the framework for what would become the Residential Communities Initiative when it authorized the Military Housing Privatization Initiative.

Under the MHPI umbrella, the Residential Communities Initiative was presented in 1999 as one significant component of the Army's plan to address this challenge of overhauling inadequate family housing. Thanks in large part to the visionary leadership and hard work of my friends, Congressman CHET EDWARDS of Texas and then-Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Logistics and Environment Mahlon Apgar, RCI successfully navigated both the Pentagon bureaucracy and a maze of congressional commitments to come to fruition.

Congressman EDWARDS's advocacy of RCI was particularly important and is just one example of his many successful efforts to improve quality of life for our troops and veterans. Congressman EDWARDS works on these critical issues as cochairman of both the House Army Caucus and the USO Congressional Caucus. Most recently, in 2007, as chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, Congressman EDWARDS authored the largest VA budget increase in the VA's 77-year history.

Indeed, both Congressman EDWARDS and Secretary Apgar should be proud of what their efforts have since spawned. RCI has made, or will be making, its way to 45 different Army installations all across the United States, from Fort Lewis in Washington State to Fort Hood in Texas to Fort Drum and Fort Hamilton in my home State of New York. At each of these bases, RCI has helped to provide our soldiers and their families with the kind of modern, quality housing choices that they deserve. In less than 10 years, more than 86,000 houses have been transferred to public-private partnerships under RCI, and thousands of Army families have already benefited from renovation and new construction completed under RCI.

This initiative has not only been good for our soldiers and their families but also for American taxpayers. In the last decade, more than \$10 billion of new private capital has been invested under the RCI program, compared with roughly \$1 billion in government equity. In other words, RCI has produced a ten-fold return on our public investment.

With so many of our brave servicemembers serving the Nation in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere around the world, it is our responsibility to ensure that they and their families have all of the support that they need and deserve here at home. This not only includes the best health care available but also modern, clean, and comfortable housing choices. I invite my fellow Senators from both sides of the aisle to join me in applauding the Residential Communities Initiative and its early champions, CHET EDWARDS and Mahlon Apgar, for doing so much to enhance quality of life for our Army families. •

HONORING FALLEN HEROES

• Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I rise to acknowledge the sacrifice of our young men and women in the Armed Forces. Yesterday, I was fortunate enough to meet my friend, Albert Carey Caswell, a respected member of the Capitol Guide Service staff, in the Halls of the Capitol. He has written a poem in honor of Army SGT Jeff Mersman from my hometown of Parker, KS. Sergeant Mersman died in Afghanistan while on his fourth tour of duty with the 2nd Battalion, 503rd, Airborne Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team. I ask to have printed in the RECORD Mr. Caswell's poem in memory of SGT Jeff Mersman and all those heroes like him who gave their lives so valiantly for our country.

We owe them a debt which can never be repaid.

The poem follows:

WHO WILL GO?

Who Will Go?
And who will live, and who will die? And not ask why! a Mother cries, as her sweet child has died. . . Who will go? A Mother cries!

Who will lead?
So that we all can so live in peace. Who will die, and who will bleed?

Who will go, so that we all can so succeed?
Who will serve?

Who will hear that call, that cry. . . those most solemn words?

Who will bring a better world? Who will go?
Out into the face of hell, with but their magnificent flags unfurled!

So our children can awake. . .
In a better world, with but smiles in their hearts and souls. . . as their first steps they so take!

Who will go?

Who will leave, their loved ones behind so?
With brothers and sisters in arms, together bonding into such an angelic glow. . .

Who will go?

Who will leave all that they so love?